

NOEL WARD

TESTIMONIAL



Monday, 17th May, 1982 — Kick-off 7.30 p.m.

WIGAN ATHLETIC -v- CHELSEA

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POST & CHRONICLE

NOEL WARD

Good evening everyone.

Welcome to this, my
testimonial game against
Chelsea F.C.

I would like to thank the Board,
manager and players of Wigan
Athletic, the Board, manager and
players of Chelsea. A special
thank you to the members of my
testimonial committee who have
worked hard to organise
everything.

I would also like to
congratulate Larry Lloyd and his

players on promotion to Division
Three.

When you are playing football
you get called many things. I
think Harold Ashurst of the
Wigan Observer came up with a
real beauty. We were playing
Accrington Stanley in the semi-
final of the Lancashire Senior
Cup. I scored twice in a 4-3 win.
Harold reporting on the match
described my second goal as,
Ward galloped into the box like a
RAMPAGING OSTRICH. Thanks
Harold!

Cheerio everyone and thank
you for your attendance.

Noel Ward.

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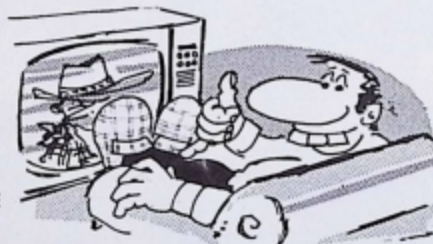
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WIGAN ATHLETIC FOOTBALL CLUB

I WOULD LIKE TO WISH
NOEL ALL THE BEST
FOR THE FUTURE

FREDDIE PYE
CHAIRMAN.

*IT'S SAD THAT SUCH A
PROMISING CAREER
SHOULD HAVE ENDED SO
TRAGICALLY, BUT I AM
SURE THAT NOEL HAS
ENOUGH DETER-
MINATION TO OVERCOME
THESE SERIOUS SET-
BACKS.*

*I SEND HIM EVERY GOOD
WISH FOR THE FUTURE.*

LARRY LLOYD.

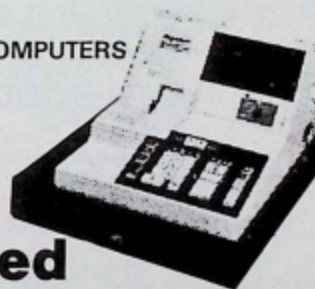
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THIS SEASON.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

NOEL WARD was one of Ian McNeill's first signings when he returned to the club in 1975 and to say he had mixed fortunes at Springfield Park is putting it mildly.

Out of the team and sometimes booed by the fans in early days, team captain in the Fourth Division, a trial with Chelsea with a view to being signed and, the highlight of all — inclusion in the Northern Ireland squad for an international match. Then came disaster. On that fateful day, September 1st, 1979, Noel broke his leg in a collision with Derek Showers against Portsmouth at Springfield Park and it was an injury that was to finish his career.

But it's fair to say that through it all — the good times and the bad, Noel never changed. In his early days, if he was bitter at the fans' reaction then he never showed it. And when the coin turned and Noel experienced success, he was the same, quiet, likeable Irishman.

He battled back in a bid to regain full fitness after his injury but after going so close on many occasions, he was finally forced to call it a day.

Noel Ward was desperately unlucky. The injury was bad enough in itself, but coming when it did, just as the sun was beginning to shine on a very promising career indeed, was the cruellest blow of all.

Whenever I see Noel these days, I think of a conversation we once had on the team coach going to an away match.

It was just after Noel returned from Chelsea and during the conversation I remarked on the changes in circumstances while Noel had been at Wigan.

His reply couldn't have been more prophetic: "If I've learned one thing in this game it's to enjoy the good times, because when the bad times arrive they come with a vengeance."

Harold Ashurst, Wigan Observer.

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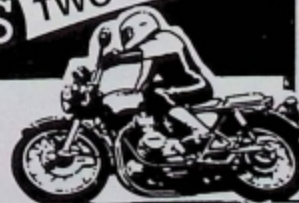
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WELCOME TO CHELSEA



CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB — 1981-82.

Rear: (from left to right) Michael Nutton, Colin Lee, Colin Pates, Micky Droy, Paul Williams, Phil Driver, Paul Ward. **Middle:** Norman Medhurst (Head Trainer), Ron Stuart (Chief Scout), Peter Rhoades-Brown, Timmy Elmes, Gary Shivers, Bob Iles, Petar Borota, Mike Fillery, Gary Locke, Chris Hutchings, Mick Leach (Youth Team Coach), Eddie Franklin (Physiotherapist). **Front:** Ian McNeill (Assistant Manager), Graham Wilkins, Kevin Hales, Clive Walker, Dennis Rofe, Colin Viljoen, Ian Britton, John Bumstead, Alan Mayes, John Neal (Manager).

I FEEL very pleased to be able to pen a few lines for Noel and also able to help in bringing Chelsea to Springfield Park.

When I had chance to sign Noel on a free transfer from Aberdeen, I jumped at it, as all the reports regarding his play and character were excellent. It certainly worked out that way and Noel had a very big say in Wigan's entry into the Football League, with his captaining and play in the N.P.L. Obviously our first season in the Fourth Division was very important to us as we had to prove ourselves. This we did and none more than the "big fellow" himself, when we finished a creditable 6th in the division. His outstanding play brought him to the

verge of international recognition by being selected by Danny Blanchflower to join the Northern Ireland squad. Danny also fancied him going to Stamford Bridge.

It was a very sad day when Noel broke his leg against Portsmouth, because Wigan Athletic sadly missed his leadership and character. Unfortunately his injury proved to be very troublesome and in the end put paid to his career in football.

I would like to wish Noel and his wife Betty and their children all the very best in the future, and hope that a good cheque will go their way from tonight's match.

Ian McNeill.

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The NOEL WARD Story



IT'S always a great tragedy when a talented sportsman is struck down in his prime.

But in the case of Noel Ward the blow was doubly so. He had joined Scottish side Aberdeen from Northern Irish outfit Portadown and subsequently joined up with Ian McNeill on his return to Latics prior to the club gaining Football League status.

Noel quickly became a firm favourite and when Latics were admitted to the League he steered them through difficult days as Club skipper.

After one of his early league performances, against Doncaster Rovers, my former colleague Nick Duxbury wrote of Noel. "Centre half Ward, chameleon like in the way he repeatedly changed from stopper to striker, ruthlessly ruled the 'skies' above the Springfield Park turf.

"In the air he proved unbeatable and a terrific header which smashed against the crossbar would have made a more memorable goal than the rather scrappy 51st minute winner.

Noel showed his versatility later in the same season when he played half a friendly game with Dundee... in goal. He was beaten just the once — and then from the penalty spot.

Then came the recognition of his remarkable

rise to fame. Chelsea boss Danny Blanchflower, doubling as the Northern Ireland chief, invited Noel to Stamford Bridge for trials.

Impressed he was, but sadly Chelsea couldn't afford the cash to buy him. However, there was consolation for Noel in the shape of being called into the Northern Ireland squad.

That first cap eluded him and tragically early on, a season later, Noel's career was brought to a premature end when he broke his leg in a frantic encounter with Portsmouth at Springfield Park.

Noel battled for nigh on two years afterwards to try and regain his full fitness. In the end he had to admit defeat, he hung up his boots on medical advice and the game as a whole was a lot poorer for his absence.

Having lost touch with his trade, a fitter, Noel found himself unemployed, an ideal illustration of the ups and downs of a soccer star.

Happily, loyal Latics fans have banded together to run a Testimonial fund on his behalf and on a brighter note Noel's back among the football action... as manager of local league side Ashton Town.

Chris Gill.



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ATHLETIC**
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- 1 Roy Tunks
 - 2 John McMahon
 - 3 David Glenn
 - 4 Alex Cribley
 - 5 Larry Lloyd
 - 6 Colin Methven
 - 7 Eamon O'Keefe
 - 8 Graham Barrow
 - 9 Les Bradd
 - 10 Peter Houghton
 - 11 Mark Wignall
- Subs: Jeff Wright,
Mick Quinn.

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SCORERS

LATICS:

VISITORS:

.....



CHELSEA
(All Yellow)

- 1 Steve Francis
- 2 Graham Wilkins
- 3 Chris Hutchings
- 4 Denis Rofe
- 5 Colin Pates
- 6 Gary Chivers
- 7 Peter Rhoades-Brown
- 8 John Bumstead
- 9 Colin Lee
- 10 Clive Walker
- 11 Michael Fillery
- 12 Ian Britton and
Paul Canoville